N° V

THE THEATRICAL

CENSOR.

BY A CITIZEN.

" The stage I chose—a subject fair and free—
" 'Tis yours—'tis mine—'tis public property.
" All common exhibitions open lie,
" For praise or censure, to the common eye.
" To clap, or hiss, all have an equal claim;
" The cobler's and his lordship's right the same.

CHURCHILL.

Monday Evening, Dec. 16.

MORTON'S "SCHOOL OF REFORM."

IN our last, we obtruded on our readers' patience the scene from this comedy where *Tyke* is first introduced, in order to shew that Mr. Jefferson has not a proper idea of that character. *Tyke* is of the description, of which the originals are so often met with; in whom a certain dullness, as to general impressions, is associated with the utmost acuteness in matters of chicane. He is not insolent, but clownish: a knave, but not a wit: or, at least, he is a wit of the country, and not of the town. The art of the actor should, throughout, strongly indicate that all is not at peace within his breast; tnat, in spite of his affected callousness, he feels himself an

Outcast of Virtue.—
Where'er the sun drives round the various day,
'Tis the same sun that here beholds his guilt.

He should, in some measure, prepare the minds of the spectators for the dawn of that Conviction and Reform which subsequent circumstances bring about; and not suffer them to be so much taken with his humour, as to cause them to regret his laying it aside for the expressions of a mind awakening to reason, and tormented with a thousand pangs; when "the avenging fiend," "with whips and stings, tortures his inmost soul."

What gives further weight to these opinions is, the effect which Mr. Jefferson's delineation of the character had upon the major part of the audience. When *Lord Avondale*, in the second act, by his enquiries, brings the recollection of *Tyke* to the sufferings of his father, whom he had driven nearly to distraction by his bad course of life, previous to his transportation, the criminal's answer occasioned a burst of laughter, instead of exciting commiseration. Is it possible that the following passage, if well delivered, and preceded by proper action, could have excited risibility?

Tyke. (*striking his forehead.*) Say no more about that, and you shall hear all.—Yes, I had a father; and when he heard of my disgrace, the old man walked, wi' heavy heart I warrant, all the way tid' jail to see me; and he prayed up to heaven for me—(*pointing, but not daring to look up*) just the same as if I had still been the pride of his heart, like. (*Speaks with difficulty, and sighs heavily.*)

The laugh was repeated, even when he uttered this more affecting passage.

Tyke. When the signal-gun for sailing was fired, I saw my old father drop down dead—and somebody took up my child, and carried it away. I felt a kind of dizziness; my eyes flashed fire; the blood gushed out my mouth—I saw no more. (*Sinks exhausted into a chair.*)

We have dwelt thus long on a subject which seems not to require much elucidation. It is probable this play will be often repeated in Philadelphia; and the justness of our remarks may be better observed on a second representation.

Mr. Wood was happy in *Ferment*. Some parts of the character, however, seemed rather altered from copy.

The *Old Man* was represented by Mr. Cross with feeling and judgment.

Mr. Cain, in *Frederick*, gave us very great satisfaction. We observed defects, however, in his pronunciation; among which is *wan*, for *one*.

General Tarragon was a finished *picture*, in Warren's best style.

It is grateful to us to mention Mrs. Morris in terms of praise. The character of *Mrs. St. Clair* is well suited to her abilities; and she gave it with uncommon effect.

Shelah. . . . . Alas!

We never saw Mrs. Wood to so much advantage as in *Mrs. Ferment*. We have ever thought this lady an ornament to the stage; and she might be more engaging by a little attention to trifling objects. We would again remind her that her laugh is not natural. We do not agree with the poet in the following lines:

> Nature a thousand ways complains,
> A thousand words express her pains:
> But for her laughter has but three,
> And very small ones, Ha, ha, he!

THE "SPOILED CHILD"

Was repeated with great applause. Mrs. Woodham performed with more vivacity than before.

Mr. and Mrs. Francis, in *Tag* and the antiquated *Miss Pickle*, are above praise.

We would advise Mr. Warren, who never displeases when he consults his own judgment, not to attempt the commonplace *catch-claps* of minor performers. Let him sink the *five-penny bit*,* in the name of common sense! "Hope no offence. —Guess what will follow; and must take the consequences."

* An uncouth expression, used by citizens, for *shortness*, instead of *six cents*.

Wednesday Evening, Dec. 18.

HOME'S "DOUGLAS."

Lord Randolph, Warren;—*Glenalvon*, Wood;—*Young Norval*, Cain;—*Old Norval*, M'Kenzie;—*Lady Randolph*, Mrs. Melmoth.

THE favorite tragedy of "Douglas," in spite of its numerous beauties, must always, like many other dramas, owe the greater part of its reputation to stage effect. Even in the theatre, it is far from affording that unmixed pleasure, which springs from the conception of a tale, noble, lovely, or comic, in all its parts, and from the awakening in the mind of no other ideas than those of truth and virtue. That *Lady Randolph* should, in early life, have lost both her husband and her child; that her succeeding years should have been passed in grief; that this child should be at length restored, and restored a noble youth, filled with martial fire, and worthy of his father and of her; that this cup of joy should be again dashed from her lips; that this

——hapless son of a most hapless sire,

—"the beautiful, the brave," should almost instantly perish; and that her exhausted spirit should sink under this last wound; all these are circumstances highly interesting, and the combination of which is truly tragic: it fills us with the sublime sentiment of pity for suffering virtue.—Add to this, *Douglas* contains much harmony of versification, much richness of language, and much grandeur of thought. But, when we are obliged to follow the mean and intricate story of *Lady Randolph's* second marriage, and the pretended mourning for her brother (an artifice acted for so long a period), we are shocked at that continued insincerity of which a noble mind is utterly incapable. A poet, indeed, may learn, in the barbarian school of the world, to patch together incongruities like these, but he will never see them, where alone he ought to copy, in *la belle nature*. The hero of a poem may be imperfect; but not in

those points which constitute the very essence of a hero. He may commit great crimes, through the violence of passion; but never the smallest through deliberate deceit. He must, in the language of Elvira, "if not always *justly*, at least act always *greatly*."

It is well known, that Mr. Home was dismissed from the ministry of the church of Scotland on account of this production. The event has usually been attributed to the narrow principles of the presbytery, in whose eyes the pen of a clergyman was polluted by writing for the stage. It might be so; but, upon the whole, we are not entirely surprised that a body, having the authority, should exercise this severity toward the author of Douglas. There are many passages which do not evince the greatest correctness of thinking. We shall not insist on those *helps* to superstition which might be pointed out, but which the world does not appear to call immoral, nor those mistaken ideas of Providence which afflict so many of mankind. We shall content ourselves with holding up one instance, in which our judgment will have a better chance of general support. The seducer, *Glenalvon*, hypocritically defends himself in these words:

> Permit me yet to say, that the fond man
> Whom love transports beyond strict virtue's bounds,
> If he is brought by love to misery,
> In fortune ruin'd, as in mind forlorn,
> Unpitied cannot be. Pity 's the alms
> Which on such beggars freely is bestowed:
> For mortals know that love is still their lord,
> And o'er their vain resolves advances still.

Surely this sophistry should have received a different reply from *Lady Randolph* than that which "is set down for her:"

> Reserve those accents for another ear;
> To love's apology I listen not.

Glenalvon, like a true sophist, confounds love with seduction; *Lady Randolph*, with the clear-headedness of virtue, should, in one word, have separated them.

But *Lady Randolph* is disgraced on other occasions.—Does she not satirize the sex, when she says to her child, and on such an occasion,

Arise my son! In me thou dost behold
The poor remains of beauty once admir'd?

This is the language of a poet, and not that of a mother.

We shall examine no further the imperfections of this play, but turn to a rapid view of some of those many beauties which justify its fame. Two scenes alone have any considerable pretensions to dramatic merit; the discovery and the death of Douglas. In the former, the poet has some fine touches, and the actor a field for the display of considerable powers. When *Norval* relates that he saved the infant from the river, *Lady Randolph* is so convinced that that infant was her son, that she makes no enquiry about its case, but only——

——Was he alive?

She is assured he was. Her imagination still dictates. She has no doubt of his death:

Inhuman that thou art,
How coulds't thou kill what waves and tempests spar'd?

Norval delivers, at some length, a remark of a merely general nature:

The needy man, &c.

Passages of this kind often deserve no better name than that of splendid errors of dramatic genius. The present is very naturally placed; but, if it become the mouth of *Norval*, what a burst of excellence does it not call for in the representative of *Lady Randolph*! With what an agony of impatience must not a mother hear this interruption of the history of her "long-lost hope!" How often must she be on the point of interrupting it; and with what difficulty must she restrain herself, in expectation that still the next word will speak of *Douglas*.

Her imagination never gives up the worst: "Not many days ago," says Norval, "he was alive." She "wrests his words to her purpose," and exclaims,

O heavenly pow'rs! did he then die so lately?

But what a victory of the heart, what an abandonment of every prudential consideration, when she arrives at the end of the narrative!—for her first marriage, and the birth of her child, were alike secrets, which she had carefully preserved—

'Tis he! 'tis he himself! It is my son!
O sov'reign mercy! 'Twas my child I saw!

In the short dialogue that precedes the death of *Douglas*, every line contains some beauty of the first order. It is difficult to say, whether the last surpass, or only equal, all the rest.

———My eyes, that gaze on thee,
Grow dim apace!—My mother!---O my mother!

In the representation of this tragedy, there were many things to blame, and much to praise. *Lady Randolph* was supported with those fascinating powers for which Mrs. Melmoth is so justly distinguished. Her soliloquy in the first scene was a master-piece of the art. Her whole deportment spoke the disconsolate mourner,

Incapable of change.

In the second act, when she exclaims,

My lord, I cannot speak what now I feel,

the voice of Nature was heard even in the extremities of the theatre; it struck on every heart.

As to Mr. Cain, in *Norval*,

I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines.

It is a true observation, that early impressions seldom wear away; and we have observed that this part is very rarely well performed, from its being generally the first character attempted by theatrical adventurers. Their first essays are marked by particular awkwardness, which can never be totally reformed.

The costume of *Young Norval* is always neglected. The bow of the Scotch was not long; but, on the contrary, so short as to be raised from the ground when the arm was extended horizontally. When not in use, it was generally unstrung, and slung on the back, in the opposite direction to the quiver. Does it not seem inconsistent that a man should carry a *lengthy* bow in one hand, and bear a ponderous shield on the opposite arm,

which would impede the use of the offensive weapon? Besides, the graces require that the right hand be not encumbered with a weapon of so enormous a size. But, perhaps, its length is a convenience, to give energy to the actor's delivery, as in Mr. Cain's performance. At the close of almost every sentence, he gave a thump on the boards with it, which resounded throughout the house. When he says,

This moon, which rose last night round as my shield,

the shield was struck by the bow, so as to produce a sound similar to that of a blood's cudgel on a watchman's shattered lantern; and when

A band of fierce barbarians from the hills
Rush'd like a torrent down upon the vale,

this was expressed by another thump of the bow upon the boards. Again,

The shepherds fled for safety and for succour.
(*Thump.*)
The pursuit I led
Till we o'ertook the spoil-encumber'd foe.
(*Thump.*)
An arrow from my bow had pierc'd their chief."
(*Thump.*)

And it was not till Mr. Cain came to the passage—

Yon trembling coward, who forsook his master—

that we were able to discover that this was the man who so often charms us in the sentimental walks of genteel comedy.

Another great defect in Mr. Cain's declamation is giving particular force to conjunctions, and other inconsiderable parts of speech.

Declare my birth,
AND in the field I'll seek for fame and fortune.

Mr. Wood's *Glenalvon* we were not pleased with. His soliloquy was tame and inexpressive; and in the dialogue, he was more than ordinarily defective. In the second act, where he says,

Thy virtue awes me. First of womankind,
Permit me yet to say, &c.

his finger was pointed in the *index* form; which implies *contempt*, and not *entreaty* and *contrition*, the objects here intended.

We observed in Mrs. Melmoth an inconsistency which we shall mention with the same freedom that we speak of her conspicuous talents. In the interview with *Old Norval*, and during that part of his recital which should have occupied every thought, and stretched every nerve on the rack of anxiety, she was seen to adjust her veil, which had fallen too much on the left side !.....But who can be always correct ?

Mr. Warren's *Lord Randolph* was chaste and dignified.

The Pantomime of " LA PEYROUSE," so named from the unfortunate French navigator, who is supposed to have been lost at sea (as no traces could ever be found of himself or the ships which accompanied him), drew a crowded audience. The deviation of this from the true history of La Perouse is very blameable. It might as well be called any thing else ; being little more than Robinson Crusoe in a new dress.

Mrs. Woodham, in *Umba*, convinced us that she has studied action minutely. Her whole performance was highly animated and appropriate.

Mr. Jefferson, as the *Monkey*, and Mr. Blisset, as the *Valet* of *Peyrouse*, were applauded to the skies. Blisset is one of the best caricature performers we ever saw.

Mr. Francis is a valuable actor. He appears to possess a perfect knowledge of the *ballet-d'action*, and gave more than ordinary interest to the savage chief.

The scenery was excellent, and well-managed.

Mrs. Jefferson personated the wife of *Peyrouse* in such a manner as to convince us, that (although we cannot help seeing defects in her general performance) she neither wants taste nor pathos.

It would be undoubtedly more agreeable to the female part of the audience, if less frequent use were made of fire-arms on the stage.

Friday Evening, Dec. 20.

"THE POOR GENTLEMAN."

Lieut. Worthington, M'Kenzie;—*Corporal Foss*, Rutherford;—*Sir Charles Cropland*, Cain;—*Sir Robert Bramble*, Warren;—*Humphrey Dobbins*, Francis;—*Farmer Harrowby*, Bray;—*Stephen Harrowby*, Blisset;—*Ollapod*, Harwood;—*Frederick*, Jefferson;—*Emily Worthington*, Mrs. Wood;—*Miss Lucretia Mac Tab*, Mrs. Cunningham, (from the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh; her first appearance on this stage);—*Mary*, Mrs. Jefferson.

THIS comedy is from the prolific pen of Colman the younger, and affords some very laughable scenes. The author, however, does not disdain to borrow freely from others; witness the third scene of the third act; where Shandyism is palpable enough. The second scene of the third act is well imagined, and its equivoque highly pleasing.

From Mr. Harwood's appearance in *Goldfinch* we had no very favourable opinion of his talents. In *Ollapod*, however, he was excellent. The character was never better performed in London. Mr. Harwood possesses fine taste and just discrimination. He committed an error in judgment only, when he undertook the part of *Goldfinch*, which is by no means calculated for the display of those powers which we discovered in Mr. H.'s *Ollapod*. We shall attend the next performance of this actor with much pleasure.

The whole of the characters, indeed, this evening were admirably supported, with the exception of *Frederick*, in whom we observed a few defects. Mr. Jefferson is a good actor in many characters, and in some almost inimitable; but his *forte* is certainly not in genteel comedy.

There is nothing more vulgar than the constant display of a white handkerchief dangling out of the pocket, or flourishing in the hand. This is, however, not peculiar to Mr. Jefferson.

Frederick should be gay and animated, without affectation. His first interview with Emily was by far the best part of Mr. J.'s performance this evening. Grimace was there laid aside, and we saw Nature peeping, for a moment, like the rays of the sun through the openings of a dark cloud. We remarked that Mr. J. did not speak the line assigned to him in the Epilogue.

When Mr. Rutherford appeared as *Montgomeri*, in the tragedy of the Carmelite, we had very little hope of his success in the walks of Melpomene. It gives us much satisfaction to be able to speak of his performance this evening with the warmth of full approbation. His *Corporal Foss* was so well delineated, that we felt inclined to exclaim with my uncle Toby, "Thou hast many excellences, Trim!"

The first scene of the second act, in which *Farmer Harrowby* (well performed by Mr. Bray) inquires of the Corporal the true situation of *Worthington*, was a fine picture of Nature. The honest simplicity of the farmer, and the affecting attachment of a wounded soldier to the sunken fortunes of his officer, were justly portrayed. The tears of the audience acknowledged the impression;—and let them not be loth

> To give the flowing Virtue manly way.
> 'Tis Nature's mark, to know an honest heart by;
> Shame on those breasts of stone, that cannot melt,
> In soft adoption of another's sorrow.

Would we could say of some performers,

> ———You have worth
> Richly enamelled with modesty;
> And tho' your lofty merit might sit crown'd
> On Caucasus, or the Pyrenean mountains,
> You chose the humble valley; and had rather
> Grow a safe shrub below, than dare the winds,
> And be a cedar.

In *Miss Lucretia Mac Tab*, a tawdry remnant of decayed pedigree, Mrs. Cunningham, a new actress from the theatre-royal, Edinburgh, gave general satisfaction. Mrs. Oldmixon

formerly personated this character; and, notwithstanding her uncommon merit in the gay and caricature scenes of comedy, always failed to give effect to the part of *Lady Lucretia*. She did not mimic the broad dialect, nor display the ridiculous pride of this antiquated virgin. Mrs. Oldmixon reminded us of a mere English tabby, resembling one of the formal and stately Harlowes, as delineated in the romance of Richardson. But Mrs. Cunningham, during the whole of her performance, was precisely that species of Scotchwoman which the author intended. In her dialect and deportment we found much to applaud; and this actress, whom we think a real acquisition to our theatre, marked, with much accuracy of judgment, her clear perception of the difference between the gay laugh of comedy and the broad grin of farce. We are convinced that Mrs. Cunningham would excel in *Mrs. Heidleberg*, &c. and we hope to see her frequently in characters of this description. It is not customary to give the Scotch accent to *Lady Lucretia*, but it is certainly more *à-propos*, and was always adopted by the celebrated Mrs. Sparks, of Drury Lane, that very pink of *Lucretias*.

" PAUL & VIRGINIA,"

In the representation of this evening, suffered by Mr. Woodham's omitting " The Wealth of the Cottage," which, in this piece, is much more appropriate than " Just like Love."

As both will probably be often sung at our theatre, we shall insert the words of them.

THE WEALTH OF THE COTTAGE.

A blessing unknown to ambition and pride,
That fortune can never abate,
To wealth and to splendor tho' often denied,
Yet on poverty deigns to await;

That blessing, ye powers, oh! be it my lot
The choicest best gift from above;
Deep fix'd in my heart, shall be never forgot—
The wealth of the Cottage is Love.

Whate'er my condition, why should I repine,
By poverty never distress'd?
Exulting I felt what a treasure was mine;
A treasure enshrin'd in my breast.
That blessing, ye pow'rs! still be it my lot;
The choicest best gift from above!
Still fixt in my heart, it shall ne'er be forgot—
The wealth of the Cottage is Love.

JUST LIKE LOVE.

Just like love is yonder rose,
Heav'nly fragrance round it throws;
Yet tears its dewy leaves disclose,
And in the midst of briers it blows,
Just like Love.
Cull'd to bloom upon the breast,
Since rough thorns the stem invest,
They must be gather'd with the rest,
And with it to the heart be press'd
Just like Love.
And when rude hands the twin-buds sever,
They die, and they shall blossom never,
Yet the thorn be sharp as ever—
Just like Love.

Alambra was well performed by Mr. Cross, who is very respectable as a singer.

We admire Mr. Jefferson's *Dominique*. This cast of character is suited to his genius. He is very successful in burlettas.

Mr. Robbins has a voice well adapted to the part of *Trojick*. If there were a good female singer added to the company, the

musical force would be sufficient for most of our favorite comic operas, which are always received with pleasure, and ought not to be neglected.

Whoever reads the beautiful Indian pastoral, from which this opera took its name, must be convinced that it might have been dramatized in such a manner, as to form one of the most splendid exhibitions imaginable. The rich scenery of the Isle of France, the loves of Paul and Virginia, and the fidelity of Dominique, afford ample materials for the pen of the dramatist, and the touch of the painter. In its present form, we see little more than the skeleton of a production which, we doubt not, will one day receive the attention it deserves.

MR. CENSOR,

You are so much talked of in all the parties where I visit, that I should like to know what sort of creature you really are. I have stolen a glance at your picture to-day, in Fourth-street; but I suppose that to be only a mask. Pray, Sir, are you the ugly gentleman that sat next to the lady, with the red face, who talked so loud, at my left hand the other night, as to disturb the performance. Whenever mama takes me to the play, I am at great pains to find you out; but I can't think what part of the house you sit in. I often fancy I hear your voice in the gallery; but if you were to sit there, you would *look down upon* the performers, and I am sure you are too well-bred a beast for that. If you were in the pit, you would *loook up to them*, and in that case you would be more civil than you are; so, I conclude you are *above that;* and I can't think you would trust yourself in the lower boxes, for then they would be *even with you.*

So no more at present, from

PATTY PUZZLE.

One Hundred Dollars Reward!!!

MAIMING AND WOUNDING!!!!

New Theatre, Dec. 21, 1805.

WHEREAS the Ladies and Gentlemen of this Theatre are continually and grievously annoyed by a certain creature, animal, beast or brute, at present unknown, and from which they have received various bites, scratches, rubs, cuts, strokes, and other inconveniences; and whereas several of the said Ladies and Gentlemen have been shockingly mangled, and, with very few exceptions, they all remain, to this present speaking, in a *sad* condition; and whereas there is great reason to fear, that the said creature, animal, beast or brute, at present unknown, hath and may bite some of the most orderly frequenters of this Theatre, who may thereby be induced to snarl and otherwise stir themselves, to the disturbance of the peace of the same; the said orderly frequenters having hitherto abstained from showing whether they were asleep or awake, by any token of censure or applause; a line of conduct equally creditable to the performers and the audience, and extremely encouraging to merit.

This is to give notice, that whoever will apprehend the said creature, animal, beast or brute, shall, upon conviction, be entitled to the above reward, to be paid by the *Treasurer of the Committee for conducting a new Theatrical Censor, in which nothing is to be censured but empty boxes.*

N. B. The said creature, animal, beast, or brute, hath been seen by two or three of the performers, as well ladies as gentlemen; but, for want of presence of mind, it was not secured. The same inadvertence has prevented their affording a sufficient description; but they all agree, that it is *monstrously disagreeable.*—The door-keepers have been ordered to look hard at all persons entering this Theatre.

EPIGRAM,

Occasioned by Mr. Cain's performance of Douglas.

If on the stage maternal tears might flow,
And *Melmoth* feel, as there she pictures woe,
Sure she had wept the mother twice undone,
And mourn'd indeed her *doubly murder'd son.*

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

On our stage, the word interesting is pronounced inte*rest*ing, very improperly.

Several performers say *obleege* for oblige.

To CORRESPONDENTS.

We wish to hear further from *Jack-all*, in pursuance of his natural avocations.

Grim's letter we will insert in our next.

We still must apologize for the non-appearance of several communications, which, as we shall now continue to give more matter, will appear ere long.

The next Number of the "Theatrical Censor" will not appear till Thursday, Jan. 2, 1806; after which it will be published regularly, on an enlarged plan, at the same price, Mondays and Thursdays. The Numbers will not be ready for delivery till Three o'clock in the afternoon of each day.

Philadelphia: published by John Phillips, at his Circulating Library, South Fourth Street, where subscriptions and communications are received. Price, to subscribers (paying in advance) 50 cents for four Numbers: To nonsubscribers, 18 cents for each Number.—At the close of the season, a Title-Page and Index will be given *gratis*: so that the Numbers, when bound together, will make a handsome pocket-volume.